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PROVERBS IN MARTIN AMIS'S *LONDON FIELDS*: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to present how Martin Amis uses proverbs in order to achieve a particular stylistic effect. The study draws on the corpus of 18 proverbs identified in *London Fields* of which paremias used in the canonical form represent precisely 50%. The findings show that the most qualitatively considerable alteration of proverbial structure includes changes in terms of lexical substitution. Examples are provided in order to examine the hypothesis that the proverbs altered by means of lexical substitution display polemics with traditional wisdom, whereas adages used in the canonical form are an attempt to re-evaluate proverbial truths. It has been observed that the use of structural changes or canonical forms has a different value for a given discourse. As regards the methodological tools used in this study, the analysis of proverbs with different paradigmatic relations and their literary relevance is largely based on the semiotic commutation test and the systemic-functional grammar approach applied as a component of discourse analysis. In particular, the transitivity theory proposed by M.A.K. Halliday is used to investigate the semantic links between proverbs and discourse. The conclusions drawn from this analysis may be further used for stating that Martin Amis's novel displays a high level of stylistic dexterity as regards the use of proverbs to suit literary purposes.

Keywords: discourse analysis, *London Fields*, Martin Amis, proverb transformations, stylistics, transitivity theory

Introduction

Martin Amis's *London Fields* (1989) has attracted a plethora of literary definitions and criticism. James Diedrick has aptly dubbed it "an unstable mixture of millennial murder mystery, urban satire, apocalyptic jeremiad, and domestic farce" (2004: 119) and Amis himself elucidated that it "is a kind of Post-Modernist joke" (Self 1993: 150). One may also classify it as a contemporary novel with dense grotesque saturation due to many

elements exhibiting such properties. For instance, Bernard speaks of the "ironic and grotesque inversion of both the Christian and the analogical paradigms" (1997: 170), Diedrick concentrates on the Oedipal rivalry between Guy Clinch and his son, Marmaduke (2004: 122), whereas Smith et al. highlight "the enactment of some grotesque sexual fantasies" (2003: 98). Although there have been various controversies regarding his artistic use of language, most notably the 1989 Booker Prize and gendered readings of the novel (cf. Smith et al. 2003: 98; Diedrick 2004: 128; Finney 2008: 139), Amis is widely regarded as a stylistically sophisticated author. His creative use of figurative language and linguistic word-play have been often praised by critics (Mittleman 1991: 123; Bernard 1997: 180; Smith et al. 2003: 109, 112; Finney 2008: 147-153). However, the stylistic significance of proverbs or idioms in Amis's novels seems to have been slightly underestimated. This may be due to Morton W. Bloomfield's covert distinction between the linguistic analysis of proverbs and novels, as if paremias should be treated as less meaningful literary constituents: "Proverbs and riddles are much easier to analyze linguistically or structurally than 'personal' works of art like novels, but even here the semantic elements cannot be avoided" (1976: 288). While it does seem logical that proverbs (as relatively short constituents) are definitely more concise than novels, they nevertheless pose intriguing interpretational challenges and ought not to be omitted in a stylistic analysis (according to Honeck: "Proverbs have unique poetic properties," 1997: 42, cf. a similar comment in Szpila 2007: 617; see also Abrahams and Babcock 1977: 416-417).[1]

The stylistic effects achieved by the use of proverbs in *London Fields* seem to depend on the form in which they are presented, i.e., it affects the interpretation of a given paremia. In what follows, I will briefly evaluate certain examples of proverbs identified in *London Fields* and concentrate on their contextual function. Paremias used in the canonical form are analysed first and occurrences of heterogenous transformational variants[2] are examined in the second section, while lexical alterations are scrutinised in the third part. The discussion of the 18 proverbs identified in the novel is arranged in the following way: paremias classified as either canonical, lexically altered, or changed by other structural transformations are presented in an ascending

order corresponding to their degree of proverbial repudiation/wisdom re-assessment/contextual elaboration on paremic constituents. Needless to say, such framework is rather subjective but seems to fulfil the illustrative purposes quite well. Finally, the conclusion offers a brief summary of the results, as well as some ideas for further inquiries into the subject matter.

The approach adopted in this study is a combination of semiostylistics[3] and the Hallidayan transitivity theory (Halliday and Hasan 1989: 24-28, 30-36; Halliday 1996; Jeffries and McIntyre 2012: 68-99; Halliday 2014: 211-358). Semiostylistics is a useful method for describing the function, relevance and construction of meaning, as well as an efficient tool for identifying semiotic processes, which is indispensable for investigating how a different grammatical structure or lexeme may change meaning. As regards the transitivity theory, it makes stylistic analysis more thorough by focusing on classifying various processes and examining agent-goal relations. Such an in-depth description may reveal underlying patterns crucial for investigating whether certain characters are dominant or being manipulated. In this study, the transitivity patterns are mainly used in the analyses concerning canonical forms (therefore highlighting the context), whereas the semiotic commutation test serves as a basis for examining the meaning of structural alterations. The semiotic commutation test is understood hereby as a means for investigating underlying semiotic patterns along the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. Despite his numerous self-contradictory definitions and multiple terms concerning a paradigm, one of Hjelmslev's postulates, viz. treating a paradigm as a "class within a semiotic system" (qtd. in Siertsema 1955: 178) is consistent with the premises of the present study. Hjelmslev's glossematic approach to commutation, along with the basic tenets of paradigmatic/syntagmatic transformations, is adopted hereafter (see Siertsema 1955, cf. Chandler 2007: 88-90 for a structuralist interpretation of the commutation test).

The application of the transitivity theory[4] in literary studies was presented by Halliday in his seminal essay "Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Inquiry into the Language of William Golding's *The Inheritors*," originally published in 1971 (see Halliday 1996). His approach is useful, amongst others, for exploring social power relations (Critical Discourse Analysis) but also

for examining the correspondence between a particular textual element (e.g., a proverb) and its immediate context (for his classification of functions consult ibid. 60). However, it ought to be mentioned that the transitive theory, if applied indiscriminately in the study of literary works, may yield self-contradictory or simply completely irrelevant results, thus proving its non-universality. Although most of the following analyses are complemented by the basic tenets of the transitivity theory, several proverbs have been purposely discussed without any reference to the transitivity theory. The justification for not having fulfilled the fundamental premiss of this study is as follows: in the case of the aforementioned set, there seems to be no (or at least hardly any) logical relation whatsoever between the transitivity patterns of the context in which a given paremia is embedded and the proverb itself. That is to say, ascribing significance to strikingly random links just for the sake of applying the transitivity theory is an unscholarly method and ought to be avoided at all costs. Without undermining the validity of the method in question, a bypass justification may be proposed instead, viz. describing the limitations of the transitivity theory in literary investigations, therefore accounting for particular cases in which the use of this method is redundant and artificial.

As regards the literary study of proverbs (which not only includes the analyses of paremias in classical works but also in contemporary fiction, e.g., Szpila 2008, as well as studies from a diachronic perspective, cf. Naciscione 2010: 10; see also Abrahams and Babcock 1977), the vast paremiological scholarship is being constantly updated (see Mieder 2009; Mieder and Bryan 1996), which clearly proves that such interdisciplinary investigations are still of great interest to present-day paremiologists (and, of course, paremiographers collecting the occurrences of proverbs in literary works, thus enlarging their corpora; but cf. Mieder's comment, 2008: 27).[5] The present paper aims to follow the step-by-step outline of a comprehensive literary analysis of proverbs as proposed by Mieder (2008: 27-28), which may be summarised in a few points: the identification of paremias (and also a description of potential introducers), their contextual embedding, a functional interpretation (relating both to the immediate context as well as to the entire novel in question), and finally the analysis of any stylistic transformations/allusions. On a more

general level, the above interpretational process may be reduced to the following guideline: "Ideally a literary proverb investigation consists of a proverb index and an interpretative essay" (Mieder 2008: 28).

2. The proverbs in London Fields

The paremic stock of the novel seems to be rather insignificant from a quantitative perspective. However, if one takes into consideration the stylistic function of the 18 paremias in a particular context, there emerges a relevant qualitative phenomenon. On the other hand, the subjectivity of the verdict concerning paremic saturation is a serious conundrum since there is no empirical scale against which the paremic status of a text could be measured (discussed in Szpila 2008: 99; cf. 2007: 615-616; 628-629). As regards the identification of the proverbs in *London Fields*, all the 18 paremias are rather easily discernible for an average reader. Again, I am well aware that the above statement is impressionistic since language users differ in many aspects, including proverb familiarity. However, the frequent deployment of paremias in their canonical form may suggest that Amis's intention was not to render adages almost unrecognisable by artistically experimenting with their syntax, but rather he aimed to reassess the usual proverb semantics by means of context manipulation (cf. Naciscione 2010: 37-55). In the case of truncation and other syntagmatic/paradigmatic transformations, the altered paremias are still distinguishable, albeit they undoubtedly require slightly more complex processing (cf. Szpila 2007: 617-626; 2008: 98, 109 for the discussion of proverb identification and alteration).

From a typographical perspective, the identification of paremias is not facilitated by any visual markers (example 5.5 being an exception, perhaps due to its Latin form), e.g., italics, quotation marks, which clearly accounts for the fact that proverbs are fully integrated within the discourse structure in which they are embedded. Moreover, there are no proverbial introducers (again, with the exception of 4.2) that would highlight the presence of a given adage. From the above, it may be inferred that the reader is expected to be familiar with canonical forms of proverbs as well as be able to reconstruct paremias from their representative constituents or frequent transformations.[6]

In total, four characters use proverbial language with Nicola Six being the most skilled at aptly choosing figurative expressions. On a similar intellectual level, Samson Young (the alleged narrator) and upper-class Guy Clinch exhibit certain cultural familiarity as well. On the contrary, Keith Talent (described as "working class, petty crook, wife-beater, rapist," *LF* 4) on numerous occasions fails to grasp the, other than literal, meaning of a given proverb. Proverbs ought to be treated as symbols (Honeck 1997: 123; Langlotz 2006: 77),[7] therefore one may interpret linguistic competence as a sub-component of the so-called semiotic competence.[8] To boot, Halliday postulates that "[l]anguage is itself a potential: it is the totality of what the speaker can do. (By 'speaker' I mean always the language user, whether as speaker, listener, writer, or reader: *homo grammaticus*, in fact)" (1996: 62; italics original). From a cognitive point of view, the inability to discern the figurative meaning of adages is characteristic of a young child's speech and may be additionally regarded as an indicator of more or less severe mental impairment, which has been often noted by psycholinguists interested in proverb processing (Norrick 1985: 82-84; Dundes 1994: 44; Honeck 1997 *passim*; Mieder 2008: 24-26, cf. the literal interpretation of idioms in Langlotz 2006: 20). In the same vein Keith Talent may be viewed as a retarded adult addicted to television, pornography and darts.

3. Proverbs used in the canonical form[9]

Paremias belonging to this category constitute 50% of the corpus and may be said to act as contextually appropriate comments or characteristic verbal manifestations of a given character's idiolect. In general, they ought not to be perceived as instances of proverbial repudiation, rather they function as literary re-evaluations of folk wisdom or, in the case of examples 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, as prefabricated units succinctly describing reality without necessarily attempting to enter into polemics with prototypical proverbial meanings (cf. "[W]hen the proper proverb is chosen for a particular situation, it is bound to fit perfectly, becoming an *effective formulaic strategy of communication*," Mieder 2008: 9; emphasis mine). The first three instances of proverb use demonstrate the language-economy function (Szpila 2008: 112) of employing fixed expressions in discourse instead of stylisti-

cally unsophisticated circumlocutions, while the remaining ones implicitly (3.5, 3.6) or explicitly (3.7) comment on a given proverb's semantics by using two distinct techniques.

3.1 It takes one to know one

> 'Camera don't lie like. That last film he was always giving her one. She wasn't complaining, no way. She said nobody did it quite like Burton.'

> 'Yeah,' said Nicola, and leant forward with her hands on the table like a teacher, 'and he probably had to stagger into his trailer or his bungalow to throw up between the takes. He's a fruit, Keith. And as I said, who cares? Don't worry. It does your masculinity credit that you can't see it. It takes one to know one. And you aren't one, are you Keith.' (190)

In this case, the proverb is used by Nicola Six who aims to convince Keith that his favourite film star is not heterosexual. Before applying the proverb in this situation, she enumerates (in the internal argumentation) two activities belonging to the perceptive 'like' type process and one classified as a desiderative process (Halliday 2014: 257). On this basis, it may be inferred that the celebrity is being treated as an object of female desire and that he is perceived as a product shaped by his numerous fans (189-190). The use of the paremia in this context may be a subtle intratextual reference to *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder* (see 3.6 below) as both Nicola Six and the film star are devoid of social independence.

The deployment of a proverb in its canonical form (and preserving the prototypical semantics and pragmatics) is quite unusual for Amis since, in most cases, he alters either of the aforementioned three categories. Interestingly, *It takes one to know one* is one of two paremias in *London Fields* employed in canonical form while also fulfilling the prototypical semantics and pragmatics (the other being 3.2).[10] The frequent paradigmatic/syntagmatic, semantic, and pragmatic changes of adages may be due to the fact that Amis strives for creativity in language use, has a thorough knowledge of each proverb's canonical form, semantics, pragmatics, and assumes that the reader will be able to interpret his comments on a given paremia (see for e.g., 3.5,

3.6, 3.7) or any slight, yet significant, structural changes. More-
over, as postmodern writer known for his innovativeness, he may
simply want to avoid being too old-fashioned and stereotypical
in his use of proverbial language: "[Proverb modification] may
be treated as an avoidance strategy on the part of the au-
thor/narrator against sounding too trite and hackneyed" (Szpila
2008: 106-107).

3.2 *When it rains, it pours*

> It seemed now that she would finally have to kiss him.
> Well, he asked for it. Nicola felt a noise, a soft rear-
> rangement, go off inside her, something like a moan—
> one of those tragic little whimpers, perhaps, that thwart-
> ed lovers are said to emit. She breathed deep and leaned
> down and offered Keith the Rosebud: fish mouth, the
> eyes thankfully closed. 'Mah,' she said when it was over
> (and it lasted half a second). 'Patience, Keith. You'll
> find with me,' she said, 'that when it rains, it pours.'
> (190)

Nicola proverbially demonstrates her dominance after having
shown Keith her self-made sex tape. As she escorts him to the
door, she finally decides to give him a "half-a-second" kiss and
concludes this brief instance of intimacy with the abovemen-
tioned proverb. As regards the form, *When it rains, it pours* is an
American proverb corresponding to the older British adage *It
never rains but it pours* (W. Mieder, personal communication,
September 28, 2015), therefore no structural alterations can be
posited in this case. Taking into consideration the few lines pre-
ceding the adage, it may be stated that Nicola temporarily loses
control over the situation as she feels (perceptive 'like' type pro-
cess) a quasi-physical uneasiness building up in her. Again, us-
ing Hallidayan terms the Actor is an abstract entity which per-
forms the attributive process on the Senser (2014: 249), present
in the line: "Nicola felt a noise…go off inside her." However,
she seems to regain her *femme fatale* status by choosing to use
the figurative expression, therefore strengthening her superiority
over Keith Talent. Moreover, the paremia *When it rains, it pours*
may be said to fulfil both the micro- and macrofunction in the
text[11] since it does foreshadow Nicola's manipulative behaviour

towards Keith (amongst other characters) and hints at the ultimate plot twist towards the end of the novel. Interpreted from a slightly different angle, it may also anticipate Nicola and Keith's sexual intercourse, which is eventually initiated by her, albeit with certain grotesque elements (see p. 428).

3.3 Ask no questions and I will tell you no lies

> Keith completed his meal in silence, with a couple of breaks for cigarettes. Then he said, 'Come on, Clive. Up you get, mate.'
>
> The great dog climbed stiffly to its feet, one back leg raised and shivering.
>
> 'Come on, my son. Don't sit around here in this fuckin old folks' home, do we.'
>
> Grimly, his long head resting on an invisible block, like an executionee, Clive stood facing the front door.
>
> 'No way. We're off.' He looked at his wife and said, 'Where? Work. In the correct environment.' He extended an indulgent knuckle to the baby's cheek, and then added, with perhaps inordinate bitterness, 'You just don't comprehend about my darts, do you. What my darts means to me. No conception.' His eyebrows rose. His gaze fell. He shook his head slowly as he turned. 'No…con*cep*tion.'
>
> 'Keith?'
>
> Keith froze as he opened the door.
>
> 'Would you give her a bottle when you come in?'
>
> The shoulders of Keith's silver leather jacket flexed once, flexed twice. 'Ask me no questions,' he said, 'and I'll tell you no lies.' (315-316; emphasis original)

Keith's brief conversation with his wife epitomises his wickedness and failure to fulfil parental duties. The proverb serves as a means to cut Kath short, thus it may be stated that it performs an important pragmatic function. Interestingly, Keith's wife (as a speaker taking part in the conversation or rather the quasi-

monologue) is not mentioned at all in the above fragment. Her only contribution to their interaction is the polite request about feeding the baby. She is, as if, 'muted' and remains passive to the point of not rebutting her husband's accusations about her inability/unwillingness to understand his darts fascination. Her lack of voice is best seen in the line where Keith gives an answer to an implied question ("'Where? Work. In the correct environment.'"). Keith's dominance, apart from the obvious quantitative aspect, is also noticeable in his being the Actor and performer of many processes, which is missing in Kath's case.

Bearing in mind Keith's limited intellectual capacity, the correct use of the paremia seems quite unnatural, especially when his idiolect is considered as a whole. He frequently makes grammatical mistakes, uses slang expressions and is not a very eloquent speaker, to say the least. In this particular case, he may be called an "idiot savant"[12] as understood by Abrahams and Babcock, who further elaborate on the subject: "Proverbial wisdom from the mouths of fools and clowns and children operates as a complicated framing device in which proverbs become moves in a literary game" (1977: 424).

3.4 There is a first time for everything (used in the past tense form) is present in the fragment:

> [S]he remembered the killer line she had laid on Guy Clinch. 'There's just one other thing: I'm a virgin.' A *virgin*. Oh, *yeah*. Nicola had never said those words before, even when she had the chance: twenty years ago, in that little gap between finding out what it meant and ceasing to be one. She had never said when it was true (especially not then. And would it have made much odds to the drunken Corsican in his mag-strewn boiler room, beneath the hotel at Aix-en-Provence?). 'I'm a virgin.' But there was a first time for everything. (191; emphasis original; cf. 133)

After her regular meeting with Keith, Nicola reflects upon her physical encounter with Guy Clinch, which was ultimately thwarted by her lie about being a virgin. The paremia may be interpreted as a reference either to the fact that she had never said the line before or to a more exophoric level that *There is a*

first time for everything could function equally well as a comment on sexual initiation in general. Interestingly, the transitivity patterns identified in this paragraph indicate that, at least in this case, she is entirely in control and is not affected by any external phenomena. Both the context (the seduction of Clinch) and linguistic construction (transitivity) prove her mental independence (cf. the opposite transitivity patterns in 3.6 below).

As regards the past tense form, it does not seem to be an intentional stylistic foregrounding, rather it is determined by the overall structure of the narrative. Nevertheless, the possibility of its being an intentional stylistic operation should not be completely excluded from the analysis. In that case, the use of the past tense form would signify a temporal paremic transformation functioning as a situational delimiter. To support this hypothesis, a passage from Honeck is cited:

> "[T]he main verb is almost always stated in the present (nonpast) or, less often, the future tense. It is unlikely that proverbs set in the past tense exist, because such usage almost always particularizes an utterance and robs it of its omnitemporal and polysituational potential. Within this constraint, however, there seems to be no limit on the kind of sentence that can be used to frame a proverb" (1997: 14).

3.5 Love is blind

> Tall, thin, the blind man stood with blind erectness, backward-tending, as road and pavement users crisscrossed past. Something wavery in his stance suggested that he had been there for some time, though he showed no distress. In fact he was smiling. Guy strode forward. He took the blind man's blind arm. 'Would you like a hand, sir?' he asked. 'Here we are.' he said, guiding, urging. On the far kerb Guy cheerfully offered to take the blind man further—home, anywhere. Sightless eyes started at his voice in astonishment. (222)
>
> Guy was kind, or kind that day. It was all right for him. He had Nicola's postcard in his pocket. The suit of armour: the brave words. Any other time he might have walked right past. Love is blind; but it makes you see the

blind man, teetering on the roadside; it makes you seek
him out with eyes of love. (223)

Contextually, this paremia operates on two planes. On the one
hand, it is a semi-literal reference to the visually impaired elderly
man whom Clinch helps cross the street and on the other, to the
metaphorical dimension of the proverb proper. With regard to
the entire novel, the proverb hints at the role of love in the post-
modern world tormented by an imminent nuclear disaster. Guy
Clinch is shocked when the man is reduced to tears: "The present
seemed perfectly bearable…until you felt again what it was like
when people were kind" (222). In terms of the transitivity theory,
Clinch is the Actor performing various activities pertaining to
the domain of 'material' clauses (Halliday 2014: 243-245). The
comment on the proverb, belonging either to Clinch through the
free indirect speech or the omniscient narrator, clearly indicates
the reversal of roles: love (an abstract entity) becomes the Actor,
therefore is ascribed substantial significance.

    This observation is noteworthy if we take into consideration
the quasi-symmetrical structure surfacing in the final lines of the
second excerpt, that is to say, the proverb proper: "Love is blind"
vs. "[blind love] makes you seek him out with eyes of love." On
a literal level, it is simply a banal contradictory statement but
from a figurative perspective it is a very meaningful elaboration
on the proverbial truth. Additionally, Guy's infatuation with Ni-
cola Six, which may be deemed a negative fact considering that
he is a married man (following the most common view which
regards adultery as immoral), summarised by the proverb *Love is
blind*, is at the same time seen more positively since it makes
Guy sensitive to human misery. The fragments: "He had Nico-
la's postcard in his pocket" and "Any other time he might have
walked right past" clearly prove the above point.

    There is yet another intriguing stylistic operation concerning
the use of *Love is blind*, viz. Amis constructs his discourse as if
on the basis of the paremia's final constituent by the repetition of
the adjective *blind* (not to mention that the man on the road is
literally blind): "blind erectness," "blind man's blind arm," and
also its synonym: "sightless eyes" corresponding, albeit not
overtly in form, to the paremia. Considering the sheer number of
words and phrases referring to the proverb (and the metaphorical

elaboration discussed above), the following question should be asked: is the function of *Love is blind* primary or secondary in this particular context (cf. Szpila 2007: 617)? Has it been simply an appropriate stylistic choice fitting the plot or, on the contrary, has this excerpt been planned to match the proverb? The above questions ought to be left unanswered as we cannot determine what the author actually had in mind while writing the passage.

3.6 Beauty is in the eye of the beholder is found in the fragment where Nicola Six elaborates on her passionate hatred of bikinis:

> As she spoke Nicola was looking, not at Keith, but at her bikini and what it framed. She rightly imagined that he was doing likewise. The interproximate breasts, concavities of throat and belly, white pyramid, the racing legs. Keith did not know, could not have guessed, would never have believed, that half an hour ago this body had stood naked before the bathroom mirror while its mistress wept—drenching the feet of the god of gravity. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Which is fun for the beholder; but what about the owner, the tenant? Nicola wondered whether she'd ever had a minute's pleasure from it. Even at sixteen, when you're excitedly realizing what you've got (and imagining it will last for ever), you're still noticing what you haven't got, and will never get. Beauty's hand is ever at its lips, bidding adieu. Yes, but bidding adieu *in the mirror*. (127; emphasis original)

The context of this "paremic locus" (Szpila 2011: 172) is Nicola and Keith's conversation in which she informs him on the etymology of the word bikini. She utters the proverb in an internal monologue and reflects on her being the object of male desire. She seems to be highly disillusioned and dissatisfied by this reified social role, therefore the comment following the adage serves as an attempt to assess her situation by means of reference to traditional wisdom, albeit interpreted in a semi-literal and mildly polemical way. As regards the transitivity patterns, in the excerpt preceding the proverb, Keith is the Actor who performs the cognitive 'like' type process (Halliday 2014: 257), while pondering about the fact that Nicola must have been naked before he met her. Therefore, Keith seems to be in control during

their interaction. In the further elaboration on the proverb, beauty (name of entity: abstract, ibid. 58) is ascribed the function of the Actor. A conclusion may be drawn, that the act of physical reification becomes intensified by the use of specific clause constructions.

As regards the ensuing elaboration on the adage itself, there are two relevant operations (following the order in which they appear): one involving the proverb's final constituent and the other being a literary comment on its initial constituent.[13] The former manipulation of the prototypical proverbial meaning, noticeable in the fragment: "Which is fun for the beholder; but what about the owner, the tenant?" is achieved primarily by focusing on the last lexeme in the syntagmatic structure, viz. *beholder*, thus creating a clear extension of the paremia in question. Furthermore, the use of two near-synonyms, viz. *owner* and *tenant*, seems to be relevant in the overall interpretation, especially when the aforementioned reification of Nicola's body (supported by the transitivity patterns) is taken into consideration. If one were to disregard the possibility of Amis being a superfluous writer unaware of his stylistic choices, it could be quite easily observed that the presence of these two near-synonyms is not purely coincidental; on the contrary, it may be an important interpretational hint. That is to say, *owner* has a wider referential scope than *tenant*; I would venture to say that most speakers would probably agree on its being semantically less specific than *tenant*. Whether or not one may 'own beauty' is rather debatable but the state of being 'beauty's tenant' is even more vague. However, in the legal sense *tenant* means "a person in possession of real property by any right or title,"[14] therefore it may be inferred that this seemingly redundant repetition actually aims to emphasise the (rather pejorative) transactional aspect of beauty in this context.

The latter stylistic manipulation is visible in: "Beauty's hand is ever at its lips, bidding adieu. Yes, but bidding adieu *in the mirror*." From a formal point of view, it is achieved by means of the previously mentioned Actor function and personification (cf. 3.5). To my mind, the italicised phrase is an interpretational key as it stresses the juxtaposition between the solitary realisation of one's physical shortcomings and the previously discussed passiveness while one's appearance is being judged by others. Sure-

ly, my understanding is merely a fraction of what may be said about this excerpt, nevertheless, it does seem acceptable to state that the employment of the initial paremic constituent in a figurative passage is a form of play on the prototypical proverbial meaning.

3.7 Look before your leap; Waste not want not; A stitch in time saves nine

> It occurs to me that certain themes—the ubiquitization of violence, for example, and the delegation of cruelty—are united in the person of Incarnacion. There is, I believe, something sadistic in her discourses, impeccably hackneyed though they remain. I wonder if Mark Asprey pays her extra to torment me. She has been giving me a particularly terrible time about the stolen ashtray and lighter. And I'm often too beat to get out of her way. Endlessly, deracinatingly reiterated, her drift is this. Some objects have *face value*. Other objects have *sentimental value*. Sometimes the *face value* is relatively small, but the *sentimental value* is high. In the case of the missing ashtray and lighter, the *face value* is relatively small (for one of Mark Asprey's means), but the *sentimental value* is high (the gifts of an obscure but definitely first-echelon playmate). Being of high *sentimental value*, these objects are irreplaceable, despite their relatively low *face value*. Because it's not just the money. Do you hear her? Do you get the picture? It takes me half a day to recover from one of these drubbings. I am reminded of the bit in *Don Quixote* when Sancho has spent about fifteen pages saying nothing but look before you leap and waste not want not and a stitch in time saves nine, and Quixote bursts out (I paraphrase freely, but I really understand): Enough of thine adages! For an hour thou hast been coining them, and each one hath been like a dagger through my very soul... (349-350; emphasis original)

This proverbially saturated passage is Samson Young's internal monologue after having been reprimanded by the maid about Mark Asprey's missing ashtray and lighter. Young compares her

incessant insistence on having respect for Asprey's possessions to a well-known quote from Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* in which Quixote scolds Sancho Panza for overusing proverbial language (cf. Cervantes 1998: 925; for the discussion of scholarship and analysis of proverbs in *Don Quixote* consult Mieder 2008: 277-316). Also, this example of intertextuality is characteristic of Amis's style (Finney 2008: 86-94; see also Abrahams and Babcock 1977: 417 for intertextuality regarding proverbs in *Don Quixote*). Apparently, adages are strongly associated with a highly irritating idiolect, therefore Young's connotations clearly point to his dislike of figurative expressions used to ascribe sentimental value to ordinary objects.

Interestingly, the explicit reference to *Don Quixote* and, in particular, to Sancho's highly vexing manner of preaching by proverb-stacking[15] (for more illustrative examples see Mieder 2008: 284-285) may hint at certain attitudinal similarities between Incarnacion—Sancho and Samson—Don Quixote. It might be purely coincidental but the Spanish maid's name, Incarnacion, seems to be a blending of the following heteronyms: *incarnation* and *encarnación* (also used as a popular Spanish name). This onomastic issue becomes relevant if one is to interpret Incarnacion as a sort of moralistic embodiment of Sancho Panza (his paremic repository described as a "sack full of proverbs," qtd. in Mieder 2008: 283-284). Furthermore, the maid is Spanish; clearly, the aforementioned analogy breaks if Samson's American origin is taken into consideration. What may be stated with more certainty is that Amis purposely defamiliarised the maid's name in order to draw the reader's attention to it and perhaps make him wonder about the motivation behind this stylistic operation. Even though the interpretation involving the two-set analogy is consistent only to a certain point, the following quotation (relating to Sancho and Don Quixote's interactions) does support it: "Clearly there exists at least 'three pairs of antithetical ideas and currents' in this uniquely paired couple of characters, i.e., 'the opposition madness-sanity,' 'the opposition art-reality,' and 'the opposition between subjective-objective'" (Mieder quoting Durán 2008: 283).

Incarnacion's insistence on respecting the "sentimental value" of seemingly ordinary objects is a literary echo of Sancho's down-to-earthness reflected in his numerous nagging comments

on his companion's irrational ventures (cf. Abrahams and Babcock 1977: 425-426). It may also be speculated that Young's quest to capture the thrilling apocalyptic escalation leading to murder (the account of which was meant to be published as his ultimate bestseller) is yet another ill-fated "tilting at windmills." To prove the above point, a few confessions made by Young towards the end of the novel will be discussed here. In the two closing revelatory sections, the reader finally learns that Young (who was supposed to be the puppetmaster behind the story) has, in fact, been slyly outsmarted by Nicola Six (forced to murder her and then commit suicide by swallowing a pill) and by the successful writer Mark Asprey:

> She outwrote me. Her story worked. And mine didn't. There's really nothing more to say. (466)

> Nicola destroyed my book. She must have felt a vandal's pleasure. Of course, I could have let Guy go ahead and settled for the 'surprise' ending. But she knew I wouldn't. Flatteringly, she knew I wasn't quite unregenerate. She knew I wouldn't find it worth saving, this wicked thing, this wicked book I tried to write, plagirized from real life. (467)

> [in the final letter to Mark Asprey] PPS: You didn't set me up. Did you? (468)

Unlike Don Quixote who finally learns his lesson and regains sanity, Young dies slowly while coming to terms with his disillusionment and painfully acknowledging his defeat caused by unrealistic pursuits. The above proves that these three paremias (or rather the literary context evoked by them) are highly relevant not only in the humorous excerpt but also in the entire plot.

4. Syntagmatic transformations

As already mentioned, this category (containing four proverbs) is the most heterogenous one since some instances of paremias are only truncated without any other transformations (or, on the contrary, are an example of addition), others are are an amalgamation of syntagmatic and paradigmatic modifications, while still others display multiple alterations, hence being the most difficult to classify.

4.1 It's an ill wind that blows nobody good

> When Nicola was good she was very very good. But
> when she was bad…In the VIP Lounge there were
> scenes of protest and violent rejection. One old man kept
> distractedly offering money to a uniformed PR officer.
> Coldly Nicola drank her brandy, wondering how death
> could take people so unprepared. That night she had ac-
> robatic sex with some unforgivable pilot. She was nine-
> teen by this time, and had long left home. Potently, mag-
> ically, uncontrollably attractive, Nicola was not yet
> beautiful. But already she was an ill wind, blowing no
> good. Considered more generally—when you looked at
> the human wreckage she left in her slipstream, the nerv-
> ous collapses, the shattered careers, the suicide bids, the
> blighted marriages (and rottener divorces)—Nicola's
> knack of reading the future left her with one or two firm
> assurances: that no one would ever love her enough, and
> those that did were not worth being loved enough by.
> (16-17)

The use of this paremia is probably the most stylistically sophis-
ticated transformation since it encompasses a few permutations.
Its formal composition will not be discussed here as it would
require too many syntactic digressions. Moreover, the considera-
ble changes are quite obvious on the level of the surface struc-
ture, therefore they are sufficient to make certain semantic ob-
servations.

This modified proverb is, at the same time, highly relevant in
terms of its macrofunction in *London Fields*, viz. it provides an
early revealing testimony of Nicola's destructive personality.
Accordingly, her role in the novel may be summarised in this
way: she is a *femme fatale* figure causing a downfall of everyone
she gets involved with by calculated scheming and emotional
ruthlessness. In this context, the paremia suggests that even at
the age of 19, Nicola was already devoid of any moral core—a
feature which did not disappear in her mature life (she turns 36
towards the end of the novel). Although the proverb undergoes
several transformations, it may be stated that they do not serve as
a means of its truth re-assessment but rather they aim to render
the paremia as a contextually appropriate comment on Nicola's

personality, thus fulfilling the aforementioned language-economy function.

4.2 Curiosity killed the cat

> Duplicity consumed time. Even deciding to have nothing to do with duplicity was time-consuming. After Keith left, to run a local errand, Guy spent an hour deciding not to call Nicola Six. The urge to call her felt innocent, but how could it be? He wasn't about to run upstairs and share the experience with his wife. A pity in a way, he mused, as he paced the room, since all he wanted was the gratification, the indulgence of curiosity. Sheer curiosity. But curiosity was still the stuff that killed the cat. (93-94)

This variant is a prime example of changes in terms of syntagmatic relations. This syntagmatic transformation (addition in semiotic terminology or expansion in paremiological terms) (Chandler 2007: 90) serves the purpose of rendering the proverb a stylistically inconspicuous element juxtaposed with the foregrounded lexeme *curiosity*. One possible interpretation is that the proverb itself does not stand on its own, instead it is an extended foregrounding of "curiosity." An observation could be made that Amis again repeats the kernel of the paremia in non-figurative contexts, thus highlighting the proverb proper (cf. examples 3.5, 3.6, 5.3). It may be argued that this is one of the very few examples discussed in this paper in which the transformation, albeit noticeable, does not seem to affect substantially the overall meaning of the proverb. Therefore, it might be treated as a counterexample of the pattern that whenever structural transformations occur, a change in meaning usually follows.

As can be easily deduced from the context, *Curiosity killed the cat* describes a situation when Guy is morally torn between pursuing his budding extramarital affair and remaining faithful to his wife by not calling Nicola. Judging from his later inability to resist his object of desire and eventually breaking up his family, it may be concluded that this paremia also fulfils an important macrofunction since he actually does end up metaphorically killed (or better heart-broken) by Nicola Six.

Additionally, the fact that Amis used a syntagmatic transformation based on expansion, thus making the proverb even more prominent, is consistent with what has been said above concerning the unproblematic identification of paremias in *London Fields*. For instance, had Amis wished to be more stylistically sophisticated and less straightforward in the deployment of *Curiosity killed the cat*, he could have chosen the following expression: "well, you know what happened to the cat."

4.3 The camera doesn't lie

The paremia is used by Keith as a means of self-assurance that his favourite film star is, indeed, heterosexual. Chronologically, the excerpt cited below immediately precedes the fragment discussed in 3.1. By employing a paremia which conveys an easily comprehensible message, Talent succeeds at making a concise and relevant comment about Burton's sexuality off and on screen.

> The workout king, the erection lookalike: however fearless and patriotic you made him, however many wives and Bibles and three-foot Bowie knives you gave him, he still belonged to locker rooms, cuboid buttocks, testosterone hotels.
>
> 'Burton Else's a happily married man,' said Keith. 'He loves his wife. Loves the woman. Do anything for her.'
>
> Nicola waited, thinking about love, and watching the dull invitation to violence subside in Keith's eyes.
>
> 'Camera don't lie like. That last film he was always giving her one. She wasn't complaining, no way. She said nobody did it quite like Burton.' (190)

Keith's utterances are rather short, containing on average 7.5 syllables, therefore it may be stated that his manner of expression is unsophisticated and syntactically unvaried. Interestingly, the paremia is rendered in a non-standard English form (with the contraction *don't* replacing the grammatically correct third-person *doesn't*). Furthermore, the colloquial *like* immediately follows the proverb, serving as a stylistically appropriate addition. Again, the term "idiot savant" (cf. 3.3) may be used to summarise Talent's contribution. The peculiar form of the pare-

mia in question is characteristic of Keith's idiolect and proves, on yet another occasion, Amis's creative manipulation of proverbial structures and meanings.

4.4 In for a penny, in for a pound

The truncated version of this paremia is used by Keith as a reference to the burglary planned by Thelonius and himself. Furthermore, an intriguing paradox is found in the description following the proverb, viz. transitivity patterns which foreground the despicable view on petty thieves (burglars are in turn "burgled by fellow burglars," 248).

> Their plan was deceptively simple. Thelonius's baby-mamma Lilette worked as a cleaning-lady—but never for very long. As soon as any household felt the time was right to entrust her with a doorkey, Lilette felt the time was right to entrust it to Thelonius (who had it copied) and then quit the following day. The following night Thelonius would be stopping by in the small hours… Thelonius seemed offended by Keith's mild hint that the filth would soon put two and two together.
>
> 'Filth don't know shit,' he said. 'This is the big one. It have long bread, man.'
>
> 'Bingo,' said Keith.
>
> As planned, Keith showed up at the Golgotha shortly after nine. Thelonius was there, as planned. Quite untypically, and not very encouragingly, Thelonius was drunk. 'Sdoveo,' said Thelonius. 'Svodeo.' He was trying to say 'Videos'. Another stretch of time passed while Thelonius tried to say 'Digital'. Well, in for a penny, thought Keith (prophetically enough). (247)

The adage is a clear hint that certain seemingly trifling obstacles are most likely to precede a complete fiasco, which seems correct since their joint venture turns out to be an ill-conceived endeavour. First of all, it turns out that their getaway car contains no petrol and when they finally do arrive at the chosen location, they realise that it has already been burgled countless times. To make matters worse, Keith soon observes that Thelonius has made a mistake and chose an ordinary corner shop instead of a

video store they had originally intended to rob. Finally, their misadventure gets from bad to worse when they become aware of the owners' presence. They promptly decide to threaten the old Polish couple until they disclose where their precious belongings are hidden. When Thelonius and Keith fail to elicit this response (leaving their DNA on the dressing-table), they simply rummage through the couple's possessions only to find that they are poor and do not own anything of significant value. Thus, they abort their endeavour and Keith tries to overcome his frustration by getting drunk.

The above summary shows that "in for a penny," is a clear foreshadowing of the ultimate failure awaiting the characters. In this respect, the paremia's function is quite similar to the one observed in examples 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, albeit its impact is profound to a lesser degree, that is to say, it does not fulfil the macrofunction noted in the aforementioned cases. Instead, the parenthetical comment indicates that the adage may be regarded as a symbol functioning on a deep stylistic level due to its noticeable relevance in the specific context.

5. Alteration by means of lexical substitution

There are as many as five paremias in this category (including two debatable examples), which clearly indicates that lexical substitution is the most productive alteration in the novel (apart from the heterogenous category encompassing syntagmatic transformations). Radical changes in proverbial paradigmatic relations (involving mainly negation) may be an adequate argument for making the assumption that the aforementioned alterations are explicit contradictions of traditional wisdom. The semiotic commutation test, viz. the substitution transformation, serves hereafter as a methodological tool for investigating the underlying structure on the level of the *signifiant* (Dundes 1968: 6; Chandler 2007: 87-90, cf. Cobley 2001: 171; Dirven and Radden 2004: 20-21). Examples provided in this section aim to prove the hypothesis that proverbs altered by means of lexical substitution are a firm reassessment of folk wisdom. These examples, though seemingly similar to the re-evaluations analysed in the canonical group, are different in the respect of being noticeably more polemical and straightforward.

5.1 Silence is golden

The following paremia is an instance of a paradigmatic transformation (substitution of "silence is golden" by the nominative absolute "silence being golden"). It ought not to be regarded as a truncated version of *Speech is silver, silence is golden*, since the two forms, though tightly related semantically and partly structurally, are two distinct proverbs (W. Mieder, personal communication, September 28, 2015).

> When Nicola asked Keith about his romantic discretion, about his ability to keep his mouth shut on the subject of women and sex, Keith coughed and answered in the following terms: 'Never do that. No way.' This was untrue. It was by no means the case. He *always* did that. When it came to kissing and telling, Keith was a one-man oral tradition…Keith had tried getting by without a regular bird, and his subsequent disintegrations were invariably dramatic. All the more reason to keep your mouth shut, if you could, silence being golden, as they said. …Keith loved to kiss and tell. But what could he tell about Nicola? Not even a kiss. (167-168; emphasis original)

The excerpt which contains the paremic locus is an extensive comment made by the omniscient narrator about Keith's attitude towards Nicola's request to keep their kiss (and perhaps the matter of the sex tapes) a secret. Apart from the presence of the idiom *kiss and tell* and the last two quarters of the proverb proper (quadripartite structure as suggested by Milner, Norrick 1985: 51-57), the fragment: "There was no money in rape. But there was money, it seemed, in Nicola Six" (169) may be regarded as a (perhaps far-fetched) literal interpretation of the proverb. To support this claim, it could be further argued that Keith associates keeping this difficult promise ("silence") with a lucrative opportunity ("golden"). The proverbial affix (Norrick 1985: 45) "as they said" serves as a stylistic marker to place the adage in cultural context and facilitates the identification of the paremia by the reader.

On the other hand, the line "but there was money, it seemed, in Nicola Six" need not be a literal elaboration on the proverb. As regards the use of the paremia, it may be said to perform an intensifying function, i.e., making the preceding utterance ("all

the more reason to keep your mouth shut") more prominent and of utmost importance. Considering the fragment describing Keith's dependence on sex, "silence being golden" might be regarded as a succinct manner of summarising Talent's determination to keep the difficult promise and receive his sexual reward.

5.2 *What goes up must come down* is featured as a truncated form transformed in a paradigmatic manner:

> Wehn Kieth got back that…When Kieth…Wehn Keith got back that nite, okay. Eezy does it. Where's the lite? Okay. No way was them last *pornos* [a kind of drink] too clever. Ditto going again to Shirt Trish again. But Nik siad OK to drink waht felt okay. Dim matter. Siad it dim matter. Man is the hunter. He slammed the front door behind him. He stood at the sink and drank a lot of warm water. Then he felt better. Then he fell over…What was it? Driving back like that—what was it? In the car, and Clive [the dog] sleeping. The moon. And London like it used to be. Many moons of the street-lamps, many moons ago. TV. Jesus. Coming up on me now. Felt yung innit. Uh-oh. What goes down must—oop. Whoop. Yeah that was the phing. Yooph, mate, yooph! (322)

One possible reason for this structural change might be Keith's inability to access his mental lexicon and search for the appropriate ending for this fixed expression. Furthermore, Keith's semiotic incompetence (Norrick 1981: 72) may be explained by his being drunk and euphoric after one of the countless sexual escapades. Even though there is no certainty whether this expression was meant to end with "must go up," it may be cautiously speculated that the lexical substitution was intentional on Amis's part.[16] If this were the case, Keith's situation could be interpreted counter to the standard reading of the proverb. His newly-acquired omnipotence would then indicate an upcoming status amelioration.

The passage in which the paremia is embedded resembles a stream of consciousness and, in terms of the transitivity theory, is similar to what Halliday dubbed "Language A" in his stylistic investigations of Golding's *The Inheritors* (1996: 75), viz. the

above excerpt shares the following main aspects with Halliday's classification (ibid.):

- Keith (subject) is the only participant—"actor in a non-directed action (action clauses are intransitive), or participant in a mental process"
- "the process is action (which is always movement in space)…or mental process (thinking and talking as well as seeing and feeling)"
- "[the process is] active, non-modalized, finite, in simple past tense (one of a linear sequence of mutually independent processes)
- other elements are present (adjuncts), "i.e. treated as circumstances attendant on the process, not as participants in it; there are: static expressions of place…or, if dynamic, expressions of direction (adverbs only)…or of directionality of perception

The truncated version of *What goes up must come down* (and possibly the substitution transformation as well, cf. the final remark in footnote 15) seems to be, in this particular context, completely natural and suitable. The aforementioned aspects concerning transitivity illustrate explicitly the linguistic simplicity of the text, therefore making it quite obvious that the paremia ought to be modified in one way or another, otherwise it would not be consistent stylistically with the entire fragment.

5.3 Charity begins at home—in the fragment presented below, the lexeme charity fulfils the role of a mass noun and the kernel of the proverb.

> What kind of man was this? How unusual? Guy gave money to charity. For every other man in his circle, charity began at home. And ended there too. Or not quite: charity continued for a mile or so, into the next postal district, and arrived at a small flat with a woman in it. These men winced at their wives' touch; they jerked up too soon to kiss them hello or goodbye. And Guy wasn't like that. (87)

A point need to be made in the preliminary interpretation: the use of the paremia in this context is, as if, a two-step process,

that is to say, *Charity begins at home* is first altered paradigmatically and then an allusion to it is made by means of yet another substitution transformation, which additionally generates an antonym to the verb present in the original proverb.

Bearing in mind the tense change (cf. 3.4 and 4.1), it may be analogically inferred that the figurative expression has the following form: "charity ended at home."[17] Again, the transformation by lexical substitution renders a structurally contradictory meaning of the preceding fragment ("charity began at home") but it ought to be treated as a further comment on the aforementioned line and not as its overt repudiation. To boot, the beginning of the ensuing sentence ("or not quite") explicitly states that the expression in question should not be interpreted as a contradiction of the paremia. Intriguingly, the initial constituent of the proverb is also used on a different plane, viz. *charity* as an abstract entity becomes the Actor in the metaphorical elaboration on the proverb proper. This stylistic operation is, as has been mentioned before, characteristic of Amis's use of adages (cf. 3.5 and 3.6) and may be said to constitute one of his major techniques for modification of prototypical proverbial meanings.

It would seem that the juxtaposition constructed on the proverbial basis is a salient testimony to Guy's altruistic benevolence as opposed to his egoistic counterparts ("and Guy wasn't like that"). On the contrary, the excerpt is a manifestation of his utter hypocrisy, which is well illustrated by the following quotation:

> In the last month he had given £15,000 to charity, and he was feeling terribly guilty.
>
> 'Fifteen *grand*? said Hope. 'Save the Children, huh?' She herself had given a similar amount to charity in the last month, but to galleries and opera houses and orchestras and other repositories of social power. 'What about *our* child? Who's going to save him?'
>
> 'Marmaduke', said Guy, 'will have plenty of money.' (85; emphasis original)

Taking into consideration Hope's fierce criticism of financially supporting humanitarian organisations and her preference for donating money to "repositories of social power," "charity ends

at home" may not only be applied to "every other man in [Guy's] circle" but also to these men's upper-class wives. Clearly, the elaboration on *Charity begins at home* serves as a further comment on Guy's hypocritical behaviour (concerning both his being guilty of giving money to charity and becoming more and more estranged from his wife) explicitly stated in a fragment preceding the proverb: "He had begun to enter the world of duplicity. He was passing through the doors of deception, with their chains of lies" (86-87).

5.4 There are plenty of (good) fish in the sea is uttered by Samson Young when he tries to comfort Guy's sister-in-law that her gluttonous lifestyle will not jeopardise a potential relationship:

> Lizzyboo says she eats too much when she is unhappy. She tells me this, between mouthfuls, in the Clinch kitchen. She tells me more over her shoulder from the icebox or he cooker. It's a terrible thing with her…She takes her head out of the bread-bin to tell me that she doesn't know what she's going to do about it. Although I could point a finger at the world situation, I'm clearly meant to take the blame for this. For this disaster also I am obliged to pocket the tab. 'Come on, honey' I say to her. 'There are plenty of fish in the sea.' Again, a poor choice of words, perhaps. Because there aren't plenty of fish in the sea, not any more. Lizzyboo shakes her head. She looks at the floor. She gets up and heads for the grill and sadly makes herself a cheese dream. (262)

Formally, it is not an alteration by means of lexical substitution but it is treated here as a substitution in the paradigm of the positive/negative form. The second instance of the proverb is unquestionably another example of negation fully compatible with Norrick's terminology (1985: 162). Additionally, Young's use of one adage both in the affirmative and negative form seems to be the most overt denial of proverbial wisdom in the entire novel. Also, the fact that he chooses the canonical form when addressing Guy's sister-in-law and then goes on to deny explicitly what he has said (by means of free indirect discourse), indicates that he treats proverbs as bygone truths. However, by purposely choosing this particular expression to comfort the woman, he

may be said to believe in the persuasive function of adages, hence not denying their value in everyday discourse (see esp. Szpila 2008: 118 for the comment on using proverbs without necessarily accepting their wisdom). To my mind, Young does not really believe in her succeeding at finding a partner (or at the very least he doubts it) since, at the beginning of the novel, he describes her as "[a] fulsomely pretty girl. She is also voluble, indiscreet and, I think, not too bright" (98; see also 135-136). Additionally, Samson is well aware of "her four or five unhappy affairs" (146-147) but he still wants to convince her that she will become romantically fulfilled in the future. Interestingly, she remains single in the novel.

As Kenneth Burke aptly stated: "Proverbs are *strategies* for dealing with *situations*. In so far as situations are typical and recurrent in a given social structure, people develop names for them and strategies for handling them. Another name for strategies might be *attitudes*" (2007: 646; italics original). In the similar vein, Mieder asserts that: "Clearly the meaning and purpose of proverbs are best revealed by strategic use in social situations" (2008: 20). Apart from fulfilling a multitude of pragmatic functions, proverbs may also be perceived as "a tactful use of speech" (Honeck 1997: 109), which is clearly noticeable in the above excerpt. A further contextual explanation is needed: throughout the novel Lizzyboo becomes infatuated with Young and on numerous occasions shows her affection but is consistently firmly rejected by her love interest.[18] However, after each such polite refusal to pursue a romantic relationship with Lizzyboo, Young is remorseful and tries to make up for his lack of interest (cf. "I'm clearly meant to take the blame for this. For this disaster I am obliged to pocket the tab." 262).

Apart from being an exemplar of the highly important pragmatic function of proverbs (which, in this case, is quite interesting due to Samson's contrary opinion on the paremia in question), *There are plenty of fish in the sea* may be regarded as a proverb performing the macrofunction (see footnote 9) in *London Fields* since the plot revolves around the concept that the Earth (in physical sense), morality, emotions, human values (amongst others) are ultimately annihilated by a metaphorical nuclear apocalypse (or "the Crisis" as it is originally called). The contradictory statement *There aren't many fish in the sea*, espe-

cially the ensuing comment "not any more," clearly points out to the ephemeral nature of centuries-old wisdom.

5.5 Pecunia non olet appears when Guy Clinch decides to provide Nicola with a large sum of money. The paremia may be classified as the first genuine example of negation in the sense used by Norrick (1985: 162). As in the case of the previous example, it is formally a syntagmatic transformation but may also be regarded as a substitution in the paradigm of the positive/negative form. It is included here in the substitution transformation category since the positive/negative change in the paradigm is highly relevant in the overall interpretation of the paremia.

> The money came in four buff envelopes. They contained used fifties. Much-used fifties. Sitting in his office (with its Japanese furniture and single Visual Display Unit and clean desk), Guy offered up his delicate and increasingly emotional nostrils to a familiar experience: the scurfy smell of old money. It always struck him, the fact that money stank, like the reminder of an insidious weakness in himself. Of course, the poets and the novelists had always patiently insisted as much. Look at Chaucer's cock. Look at Dickens (Dickens was the perfect panning-bowl for myth): the old man up to his armpits in Thames sewage, searching for treasure; the symbolic names of Murdstone and of Merdle, the financier. But all that was myth and symbol, a way of saying that money could somehow be thought of as being smelly, of being scatological. It was frightfully literal-minded of money, he thought, to be actually stinking up the place like this. *Pecunia non olet* was dead wrong. *Pecunia olet*. Christ, heaven stops the nose at it… (250-251; italics original)

> Tainted. The money was *tainted*. Certainly those fuming fifties had quite a genealogy: privatized prisons under Pitt, human cargo from the Ivory Coast, sugar plantations in the Caribbean, the East India company, South African uranium mines. This was all true: sweatshops, sanctions-busting, slain rainforests, toxic dumping, and munitions, munitions, munitions. But none of it was

> news to Guy.… Hope's money stank too: everywhere,
> vast bites out of the planet. Go back far enough and all
> money stinks, is dirty, roils the juices of the jaw. Was
> there any clean money on earth? Had there ever been
> any? No. Categorically. Even the money paid to the
> most passionate nurses, the dreamiest artists, freshly
> printed, very dry, and shallowly embossed to the finger-
> tips, had its origins in some bastardy on the sweatshop
> floor. (254-255; emphasis original)

Following Norrick's nomenclature, the most transparent case of negation is understood as the complete sentential negation but one may also distinguish a purely semantic dimension, viz. "dead wrong" as a personal comment which intensifies the syntactic negation. Moreover, the merging of literal and figurative planes, the use of two rhetorical questions and a redundant answer account for the hypothesis that certain proverbial truths may no longer be applicable to define the Postmodern reality.

The highly polemical comments on the proverb proper (probably cited in its Latin version for additional sophistication or for emphasising its antique wisdom) are, by far, the most extensive elaboration on a paremia. Not only do we find various literal remarks on money (e.g., the repetition and emphasis on the lexeme *tainted*) but also references to its similar unclean status in literary contexts and, finally, there is the geopolitical fragment reflecting the dirty origin of money.

Interestingly, when discussing his then-latest novel (*London Fields*), in the interview with Patrick McGrath (1987: 27), Martin Amis describes Guy Clinch in the following way: "And there's a remnant of the upper classes who's sitting very uneasily on a pile of the dirtiest money there is. I mean, all money is dirty if you go back far enough. Someone in a sweatshop somewhere." Clearly, Amis's utterance is an echo of his fictional elaboration on the altered paremia. This may be proof that not only is he stylistically aware of the paremic functions in *London Fields*, but also he is conscious of the role of proverbs in spoken discourse.

6. Conclusions

The detailed analyses of the proverbs identified in Martin Amis's *London Fields* serve as a basis for making a statement that proverbial wisdom (understood in terms of traditional, uni-

versal values) performs a function of stylistic defamiliarization. As regards proverbs presented in the non-canonical form, defamiliarization is achieved by the use of structural alterations, whereas in the examples of canonical forms, the context in which they appear makes them less prototypical instances of the abovementioned effect. Numerous instances of substantial alterations noticeable in various syntagmatic or paradigmatic relations evidently point to the fact that Amis is capable of manipulating proverbial structure in order to achieve a particular literary effect. Moreover, alterations in paradigmatic relations display a significantly higher degree of contradiction than the syntagmatic operations. Elaboration on the nature of prototypical proverb forms has been confirmed to be the author's most frequent stylistic tool for dealing with foregrounding the polemics with standard proverbial meanings. Although it may seem that the occurrence of 18 paremias in Amis's novel is not a substantial corpus (compared to other contemporary works of fiction), it is a sufficient amount to notice the writer's creative methods of rendering popular adages slightly different syntagmatically or paradigmatically, thus obtaining stylistically intriguing effects. As emphasised in the introduction to this paper, the deployment of proverbs in *London Fields* is particularly interesting from the qualitative point of view, since the adages perform important functions both at the form and content planes.

As regards the attitude towards paremias, Nicola Six seems to be the most competent in semiotic (and linguistic) terms. Apparently, the use of proverbs by the characters depends on their social status and mental capability. Furthermore, the transitivity theory has indicated that paremias determine the context to a certain extent, therefore having a profound effect on the overall reception of a given situation. My results regarding Amis's attempt to re-evaluate proverbial wisdom is largely consistent with what Peter Stokes says about the language in Amis's novels: "[A]lthough language may no longer be thought capable of rendering transparent truths, it is still capable of producing, in Foucalt's language, *effects*. Amis's fiction, then, investigates the social ends of a postmodern literature cast not as a discourse of truth or realism, but as a discourse of mediated truths or truth-effects" (1997: 300-301); and also: "Amis examines the effects of languages and other representational mediums in constructing

and reconstructing subjects, authors, and authority alike" (ibid. 302). It may be inferred from the above analyses that some paremias are perhaps bound to alter (or better, extend) their traditional meanings to suit the fast-paced Postmodern reality with its new system of values.

The major limitation of this study was undoubtedly the subjectivity of contextual interpretation, in particular the transitivity theory which is commonly regarded as a rather impressionistic methodological tool. Although it may have yielded certain thought-provoking results in the case of most proverbs, its applicability, as signalled in the introduction, was by no means universal and was simply impossible in several analyses. On the other hand, a strict syntactic analysis would inevitably lead to the neglect of semantics, therefore making the study largely artificial. Apart from the individualised reading of certain fragments, the small corpus analysed in the paper may not represent the way in which proverbs are generally used in Postmodern literature and, perhaps more importantly, in Amis's works. As regards further scholarly examinations, a more thorough and all-encompassing study could be conducted in order to check the hypothesis whether proverbs deployed in Anglo-American Postmodern literature exhibit significant meaning alterations. Naturally, such a study would require a compilation of an annotated corpus for comparative purposes and a scrutiny of any potential patterns.

Appendix

Proverbs in the canonical form	Proverbs in *London Fields*
1. *It's an ill wind that blows nobody good*	"She was an ill wind, blowing no good" (17)
2. *Charity begins at home*	"Charity began at home" (87)
3. *Curiosity killed the cat*	"Curiosity was still the stuff that killed the cat" (94)
4. *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder*	"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" (127)
5. *Silence is golden*	"Silence being golden" (167)
6. *It takes one to know one*	"It takes one to know one" (190)
7. *When it rains, it pours*	"When it rains, it pours" (190)
8. *The camera doesn't lie*	"Camera don't lie like" (190)
9. *There is a first time for everything*	"There was a first time for everything" (191)
10. *Love is blind*	"Love is blind" (223)
11. *In for a penny, in for a pound*	"In for a penny" (247)
12. *Pecunia non olet*	"Pecunia non olet" "Pecunia olet" (251)
13. *There are plenty of fish in the sea*	"There are plenty of fish in the sea" "There aren't plenty of fish in the sea" (262)
14. *Ask no questions and I will tell you no lies*	"Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies" (316)
15. *What goes up must come down*	"What goes down must—" (322)
16. *Look before you leap*	"Look before you leap" (350)
17. *Waste not want not*	"Waste not want not" (350)
18. *A stitch in time saves nine*	"A stitch in time saves nine" (350)

Notes

[1] Cf. Žolkovskij's discussion of the artistic aspect of adages: "The artistic nature of paremies [sic] seems also to offer a clue to one of the borderline cases between the thematic and the linguistic components, namely the opposition of particular and general statements. The fact is that general propositions (stating certain universal regularities) that form the content of a large class of proverbs quite often assume the form of a particular statement about individual objects. This is only natural if one takes into consideration that one of the axioms of aesthetics is that art 'embodies the general in the particular.' In other words, general truths (thematic component) are artistically expressed through particular statements (linguistic component)" (1978: 315).

[2] When referring to paremic transformations, I will be using paremiological and semiotic terminology interchangeably.

[3] The term *sémiostylistique* used by Molinié (1995), cf. paremiostylistics (Szpila 2007; 2008 *passim*; 2011: 171), phraseology and stylistics (Naciscione 2010: 20-21). For more on the study of proverbs from the semiotic perspective see Žolkovskij (1978; esp. 311-313), Grzybek (1994), Mieder (2008: 19-21), cf. Fontanille (1999) for a general introduction to semiotic literary studies.

[4] In Halliday's own words: "Transitivity is the set of options whereby the speaker encodes his experience of the processes of the external world, and of the internal world of his own consciousness, together with the participants in the processes and their attendant circumstances; and it embodies a very basic distinction of processes into two types, those that are regarded as due to an external cause, an agency other than the person or object involved, and those that are not. There are, in addition, many further categories and subtypes. Transitivity is really the cornerstone of the semantic organization of experience" (1996: 81).

[5] The review of literary study of proverbs is too vast a topic to be covered in a short introduction, moreover it has already been done (for an introduction see esp. Mieder 2008: 26-28; Mieder 2009; Mieder and Bryan 1996; for an informative summary consult Szpila 2008: 97-98, cf. ibid. note 1, 124).

[6] "In the process of identification it is useful to look out for the author's comments. These may pursue a number of aims. Apart from providing cohesion in text, they may indicate that the formation is perceived as a stable word combination by explicitly stating that it is a proverb or using an inserted phrase such as *as the proverb goes*, *as the saying goes*" (Naciscione 2010: 52; italics original).

[7] "Language is the semiotic system par excellence; it cannot but signify, and exists only through signification." Lévi-Strauss (qtd. in Chandler 2007: 6). For idiomatic expressions perceived in terms of cultural and linguistic symbolism, cf. Langlotz 2006: 72.

[8] Cf. "Active proverb-competence involves judgment both of the appropriateness of the saying to the situation, and whether the proverb called forth is actually the best one to use in that situation" (Abrahams and Babcock 1977: 418).

[9] Except for examples 3.1, 3.2, 4.3, 5.1 and 5.5, all canonical forms are cited from *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Proverbs*.

[10] The three proverbs in 3.7, despite their being used in the canonical form with prototypical semantics and pragmatics, are not treated here as the same case as *It takes one to know one*. I argue that their prototypical features are preserved on purpose for putting emphasis on their old-fashionedness. Furthermore, they are used not so much for communication purposes as for the evocation of a specific passage in *Don Quixote*.

[11] Cf. the micro- and macrofunction of proverbs as discussed in Szpila 2008: 113: "Proverbs can semantically refer locally to smaller portions of the text, as well as globally to larger parts, in which case they are used to serve the purpose of global characterizations of the characters, events, behaviours and reactions, reaching far beyond their physical embedding in the text. This function can be called their macrofunction, as opposed to the microfunction of proverbs, which is fulfilled when paremias refer to single actions, events and reactions, with their meanings bound to the immediate context but not reaching beyond it."

[12] "There are also the wise fools and *idiots savants* who, though not the appropriate speaker, nevertheless employ a proverb appropriate to a dramatic situation" (1997: 425; italics original).

[13] See esp. Szpila 2008: 105 for the detailed discussion on the stylistic effects of splitting proverbs into constituents.

[14] *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd edition, 2010. Oxford University Press [electronic edition].

[15] The employment of three proverbs following in immediate succession in the excerpt cited does not seem to be entirely coincidental since Amis is known for his characteristic use of triadic constructions (including various parts of speech), therefore apart from fulfilling an intensifying function, the three proverbs may be an example of an extended triadic construction.

[16] Cf. the anti-proverb: "Food: what goes down must go up" (as quoted in Mieder and Litovkina 2002: 226). However, it seems highly unlikely that the author was familiar with the aforementioned anti-proverb and used it as an indirect reference to the physiological process usually associated with excessive alcohol consumption. Cf. the comment in Szpila 2008: 111-112 concerning the reader's inability to state with total certainty the reason for the use of a particular proverb in a given novel.

[17] Cf. Mieder and Litovkina 2002: 56 for the use of the lexeme *end* in a different anti-proverbial context.

[18] This quotation epitomises the issue: "Lizzyboo is so pretty and keen and affectionate and straightforward that I'll have to come up with a really world-class excuse" (136).

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